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Eyes-on-His-Feet

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≠*Gao/na*'s younger brother-in-law, his *tun/gama*, was named Eyes-on-His-Feet. He and ≠*Gao/na* went together to gather veldkos. They found *//karu*. After a time they came to a place where they wanted to stay and made a fire to roast the *//karu*. While they were sitting by the fire ≠*Gao/na* watched his *tun/gama*'s feet and saw what looked like eyes. He tossed dust on them and the eyes blinked. ≠*Gao/na* said, 'These are really his eyes. His face is just smooth. His eyes are on his feet.' ≠*Gao/na* then asked the *tun/gama* to lean over and press the *//karu* down into the ashes so that they would be all covered and would roast evenly. While the *tun/gama* was doing this, ≠*Gao/na* threw coals on his feet and burned his eyes. This weakened the *tun/gama* and ≠*Gao/na* was easily able to cover him all over with coals and roast him. While the *tun/gama* was roasting there was a sound, *tsi i its ii tsi ii* (like meat sizzling), and the *tun/gama* put a magic curse on ≠*Gao/na*'s mouth. When the *tun/gama* was well roasted, ≠*Gao/na* ate all he could of him and put what he could not eat into a bag. He then tried to eat the *//karu*. He put one up to his mouth but his mouth would not open. He took another. It fell down to the side. ≠*Gao/na* could neither speak nor eat. He put the *//karu* into the bag with the remains of the *tun/gama* and went back to his people in the werf and ordered them to make a dance to cure his mouth. He danced and danced with them and treated himself. While he was dancing, his wives took his bag and ate what was left of Eyes-on-His-Feet and all the *//karu* but one. [The story makes no point of the fact that they were eating their brother, albeit unknowingly, and one feels the omission hovering on the edge of being said.] Then they filled the bag with earth and put the *//karu* on top. Suddenly ≠*Gao/na*'s mouth was cured. He went to get his bag to finish his *tun/gama*, put in his hand, took some earth, and tossed it into his mouth. He spat and swore at his wives. 'You silly women,' he said, 'what have you done?' And he thought what he would do to them. Next evening he called for another dance. A woman got up to dance but ≠*Gao/na* said, 'No, I want a good singer to dance with me, not you.' At last ≠Tamsa, the wife who had put the earth in the bag, got up to dance. She danced around ≠*Gao/na*, he danced around her, and when she came near he beat her fiercely on the stomach with his stick, until her stomach hung down below her groin. She fell unconscious and all the other wives took her and ran away and treated and treated her, crying, until she was all right. This is why Bushmen have stomachs that hang down.

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≠Toma and /Qui thought this was an awful story. /Qui said he did not know why ≠*Gao/na* ate his *tun/gama*. He thought the reason could not have been mere hunger—after all, /Qui pointed out, he had *//karu*. There must have been some other reason. ≠Toma said, '≠*Gao/na* is evil. Even now he goes about killing people.'

[811]

In another version the awfulness of eating a human being is modified by having Eyes-on-His-Feet come to life again. During the dance, ≠*Gao/na*'s stomach began to ache and make sounds and to swell, as with severe constipation. Suddenly it burst open and Eyes-on-His-Feet sprang out, as the wives had done after their laughter, whole and alive. In still another version ≠*Gao/na* turns ≠Tamsa into a bird called *chee*, a white and yellow bird about as big as a dove. This is one of the birds which the /Kung eat. They grab it in tree-holes when it is nesting. All my efforts to learn more about the possible identity of Eyes-on-His-Feet availed nothing. I wondered if he were not originally some veldkos, for instance, with a formation that suggested eyes, or an animal turned into a human being, or personified, like the paouw, but our /Kung informants did not know. The old people had not told them.

When my inquiries suggested to my informants that I expected them, possibly, to

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776 The concept of ≠*Gaoîna* as a powerful creator and a good being is based in the past. Schapera gives the following accounts: 'Vedder, who studied the Kung at Tsumeb, . . . speaks of *Hmwe* as a good being to whom the people attribute the creation and maintenance of all things.'[1] 'Lebzelter . . . says that all the groups [of Kung] investigated by him have "the belief in a supreme good being".'[2] The Western /Kung of the Oschimpoloveld believe he 'lives in a house in the sky to which the souls of the dead are brought. He is often prayed to, especially for rain and hunting, as well as in case of illness because he made all things and can do everything and knows everything, and he is given the first offering of the chase. The rain comes at his command as a mist out of the earth, and then falls down, thereupon making thunder and lightning.'[3]

Schapera also notes that Lebzelter reports that *Xu* of the Heikum is regarded almost everywhere among them 'as the creator of all things, including mankind, and he sends the rain. He is prayed to for rain, in sickness, before and after hunting, and before travel, and by the group at Uukualuthi he is also given the first-offerings of the chase, as among the Kung of the Oschimpoloveld. Almost everywhere he has neither wife nor children; it is only among the Eastern Kung that mention is made of these. He is regarded everywhere as benevolent and good, but appears to have no connection with the moral life of the people.'[4]

[761 ●811] This god of the /Kung and the Heikum in the past was not the death-giver. The old //*Gauwa*, as I shall presently describe, held that role. But now, in believing that the great god of the east is all-powerful, the /Kung have logically attributed to him the control over death, and hold him ultimately responsible for it. But their concept of ≠*Gaoîna*, first and foremost, is that of the creator.

776 773 [154] It is said that ≠*Gaoîna* created himself. One informant, /Tik/ay, claimed that he came out of the water, but others said they were not told this by the old people. I could discover no formulated myth of creation which everybody knew or anything which told how he created himself. People simply said they did not know. /U turned on me and asked me if I knew. When I said I did not, she snapped, How, then, did I expect her to know? After creating himself, ≠*Gaoîna* created the lesser god and then their two wives. It was stated quite specifically that there were only two wives and that the gods never took human wives. This is in contrast to the old ≠*Gaoîna* of the tales, who gives the impression that he had a bevy of wives.

The great god created the earth and gave it its name, ≠*kxa*. In the earth he created holes for water and he created water. They were not told just how he created these things, the people said. He has an iron of his own with which he works, a */ka* (*/ka* is metal). Some metal tool is what he had, a special one. They 'did not see it', they said, and do not know just what kind of a tool it is or what substances he may have worked with, but they know that he is the creator and the commander of metal.

After the earth, ≠*Gaoîna* made the sky in a dome over the earth, and he made rain, */ga*. He made gentle female rain, */gadi*, and violent male rain, */ga/go*. The people do not say freely the word */ga/go* because they fear the violent rains. They use a respect word, */noi*, when they speak to the rain and plead with it to be gentle. ≠*Gaoîna* made thunder and lightning.

After the rain, he made the sun. Sun is a 'death thing' which dries up the veldkos

[1] Schapera, op. cit., p. 183. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., p. 184. [4] Ibid., pp. 184–5.

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and the water-holes. He made the moon and the stars, all at the same time. Then he made the wind. He is the creator of all these things and he commands their movements.

He created the things that grow from the ground and he created animals and painted their stripes and markings on them and gave them their names. Then he created human beings. He created animals as animals and human beings as human beings. He commanded them to breathe. Without breath they would not live. 'First was woman and then man. The man asked the woman to give him fire. She did. The woman got some veldkos and was eating it. Then the man married the woman. This was one man's cryptic account of the creation. Something about the creation of fire seems to have been left out. ≠*Gao/na* named the first woman Khwova for his wife and he named the first man ≠Gao for himself.

From the beginning he created men and women to be mortal. He turns the spirits of the dead into *‖ganwasi* and commands them to live in the sky with him and be his servants. He orders them to go down to earth, to mortals, to carry sickness or death to them, or he may order them to carry good fortune.

≠*Gao/na* has a medicine with which he can renew himself at any time. He also renews all the beings who live in the sky with him. They get old and he renews them. They do not die. But he has not given human beings that medicine and the /Kung said, 'We cannot make it.' (They pointed out that in this quality the medicine is like water. They cannot create water. 'We know how to dig and make the holes but we cannot create the water,' they said.)

≠*Gao/na* gave arrows and bows and assegais to human beings and he gave digging-sticks. He gave people the knowledge to make all the things which they now make and taught them to do all they know how to do. 'If he did not want us to know he would not have taught us.' He commanded human beings to dig for food with their sticks and to hunt with their weapons. From the beginning they did these things.

≠*Gao/na* created all the medicines. (The /Kung word for both material substances used as medicines and magic or spiritual medicine is *n/um*.) He created the medicine which is in the medicine songs to cure the people and he created all the other medicines. He put medicine power in the medicine men (*n/um kxau* is medicine man, owner of medicine), and he calls that power *gaoxa*, the same respect word which people may use for him when they fear to say his name.

≠*Gao/na* commanded men and women to marry and live together and have children. He controls the actions of people. If they do good deeds or bad deeds it has been under his control. He arranges all things.

Several times in our talks I asked if the great creator controlled the lives of Bushmen only, or if he controlled all the people on earth. It was not surprising that the /Kung's thinking on this point was vague and contradictory. Some said, 'He is over all people. He can kill anybody.' (They had said this same thing about *Ko*.) Others claimed that ≠*Gao/na* and *‖Gauwa* as well were 'only for Bushmen'. White people and black people, they said, have their own gods.

≠Gao/na's *Appearance and Dwelling Place*

The /Gikwe Bushmen in the Bechuanaland Protectorate visualize the protagonist of their old tales, *Pisiboro*, as being of supernatural size. In the tortures of his death